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Homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Friday, May 26, 1944.

Subject: "THE 1944 CANNING PICTURE." Information from the Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Canning plans and Victory Gardens are not affected by the temporary removal of ration points from commercially canned vegetables. That step was mainly to get 1943 stocks moved from grocery shelves, to make room for the incoming pack. The folks who depend on commercially canned foods are those who can't raise their own. The government still urges everybody who can have a Victory Garden to raise vegetables for the family, including a surplus to can---or to save in some other way, by storing, drying, brining, or freezing.

Many homemakers have canning in mind in planning the Victory Garden, and have figured out how much to plant in terms of the number of pints and quarts they want on their shelves at the end of the summer. The War Food Administration has already assured us that large amounts of canning equipment are being turned out. The main types of jars you'll find on sale are the standard Masons with zinc porcelain lined caps, the "lightning" type with glass lids and wire bails, the kind with a flat glass lid held in place by a metal screw band, and the type with a flat metal lid which is edged with a sealing compound. The first three types of jars require rubber rings, and you'll be able to get rings, made of reclaimed and synthetic rubber. You can get new flat metal lids edged with sealing compound to go on coffee jars or "63's" and other commercial jars you may have saved. The old tops of these jars will do for screw bands if you punch a few holes in them.

So much has been said about the danger of oven canning and of trying to can vegetables any way except under steam pressure that it hardly seems necessary to mention it again. But every year some homemakers risk trying to can by methods no longer recommended by canning specialists, so the U. S. Department of Agriculture

again says: "If you haven't a steam pressure canner and can't borrow one or team with neighbors to can vegetables other than tomatoes, perhaps you can take your vegetables to a community canning center. Otherwise, try to save them some other way---by drying, salting or storing them frozen."

Oven canning is dangerous for more than one reason. Harmful bacteria may not be completely destroyed. Also jars may explode and cause a great deal of damage. Open kettle canning is not reliable, either. Canning specialists sum up good canning principles with these seven simple rules for success:

Can only fresh food, in tip-top condition. Have food, jars, everything used in canning thoroughly clean. Work quickly, so as to can "freshness." Heat food hot enough and long enough to make bacteria and other organisms harmless, so they won't "work" in the food and make it spoil. Follow up-to-date directions and time-tables, backed up by scientific research. Make sure jars are sealed airtight, to keep spoilage organisms outside. Store canned food in a cool, dark, dry place.

Choose fresh, firm, ripe fruits for canning; young, tender vegetables. Can them quickly. "Two hours from garden to can" is a good rule. If you must hold your products a few hours, keep them cool and well ventilated. Wash thoroughly when you prepare the food for canning. But don't let the food soak. For practically all foods the specialists recommend precooking, or heating the food before you can it. The quick heating skinks the food, so that more will go in the jars. And packing it hot shortens the processing time in the canner. This precooking is a useful step, whether you are canning vegetables in a steam pressure canner or fruits or tomatoes in a water-bath canner. Here are some other pointers on fruits and tomatoes:

If you've been puzzled as to how much sugar you'll need for canning fruit this year, you may like to know that the general wartime rule for sirup is 1 pound of sugar, or 2 cups, to each 4 quarts of canned fruit. For example, if you expect to can a bushel of peaches, you can count on getting from 18 to 24 quarts canned. That will take from 4 and a half to 6 pounds of sugar. The OPA allotment of 25 pounds of

canning sugar for each person in the family should take care of a good supply of cherries, peaches, pears, plums, apples and other fruit at this rate and leave you part of your sugar for jelly and preserves.

And you can use one-half mild flavored honey or one-third corn sirup to replace some of the sugar in making canning sirup if you like. Don't use any strong-flavored sirup or unrefined sorghum or brown sugar. And don't forget it's possible to can without sugar and sweeten to taste when you open the jars. Sugar helps canned fruit to hold its shape, color, and flavor, but it isn't necessary to keep it from spoiling.

In canning tomatoes, fill up the jars with hot tomato juice instead of water. For all water-bath canning, have the water boiling in the canner when you put the jars in. Then wait for the water to come to a rolling boil again before you start to count the time. Have the water well over the tops of the jars. Add more if it boils away.

You need water in the bottom of the steam pressure canner, too- about 2 or 3 inches. If the canner should boil dry, it would be damaged.

When you take jars out of either type of canner, complete the seal at once if the jars are not self-sealing. But don't invert the jars. Cool them right side up. Don't set them on a cold surface or in a draft. Test them the next day to make sure they are sealed air tight.

These are just a few pointers on safe and successful canning. Write to the U. S. Department of Agriculture for detailed directions for canning fruits and vegetables. The information is yours for the asking, and it doesn't pay to use hit-or-miss methods and run the chance of wasting food.

